

**Decision Maker:** EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Thursday 30 January 2014

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** ATTAINMENT OF BROMLEY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (INC CASE STUDIES)

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**Chief Officer:** Executive Director of Education, Care & Health Services

**Ward:** (All Wards);

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013, the London Borough of Bromley Education PDS received a briefing report, ED13126, on the educational outcomes for Bromley children in care. Following discussions, PDS requested further information on children in care in the form of case studies in order to better understand the Council's performance in this area.
- 1.2 This report provides pen pictures (case studies) of a selection of Looked After Children and Young People in examination cohorts for the academic year 2012/13. All of the reporting cohort for Key Stage 2, nine children, are attached in Appendix A and a representative selection of children at Key Stage 4, five children, are attached as Appendix B.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Education PDS Committee is asked to consider and comment on the contents of this report.

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable:
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
  3. Budget head/performance centre:
  4. Total current budget for this head: £
  5. Source of funding:
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
- 

### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):
- 

### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### **3. COMMENTARY**

#### **3.1 Attainment at KS2**

- 3.1.2 A table showing individual attainment of children aged 11 can be seen in Appendix A. This table shows academic progression since KS1 SATs at age 7 and additional information such as age at accommodation, SEN status, number of school changes etc, which are all factors that influence outcomes for looked after children.
- 3.1.3 All of the school place changes for these children were made with the agreement of the Head Teacher of the Virtual School. They were made to reduce the length of journey made by the pupil each day, where they had been travelling long distances or complex journeys after placement with long term foster carers. In each case, secondary transfer was considered and an appropriate secondary school identified before decisions were made. The proposal being that the pupil should settle into their new year group and make the transition with known peers.
- 3.1.4 Most children in this cohort made two or more sub-levels of progress during Key Stage 2, as expected, and some made considerably more. The exceptional progress of two children, both of whom achieved below National expectations at KS1, was largely a result of them being provided with stability in their foster placements by carers with high expectations and the capacity to provide support both within and outside school.
- 3.1.5 Changes to the reporting criteria, which require an 'overall' level 4 across Reading, Writing or Maths will, no doubt, affect the self-esteem of some of our children who will now be identified as not meeting age-related expectations, despite excelling in one or more areas. The Virtual School will continue to monitor and report on all areas separately so that weaknesses can be tracked and interventions provided. During the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process, schools are questioned about children who show large differences in outcomes between subjects. If, despite interventions, these gaps persist then further assessment will be undertaken in order to identify the reason for the failure to achieve or any underlying specific learning difficulty.
- 3.1.6 The obvious differences in education outcomes between the two children with Statements of Special Educational Needs are also of note. Child D is in a specialist school for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and receives a high level of individualised support, without which he would not be able to access the curriculum or show his capability. His achievement has been despite the breakdown of a long-term, matched placement and ongoing distress as he works through issues of serious neglect and abuse.
- 3.1.7 Child I has severe speech and language difficulties, with autistic tendencies and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Appropriate progression for him is not measured in National Curriculum sub-levels but in improved social interaction, reduced aggression and increased use of signing (Makaton).

#### **3.2 Attainment at Key Stage 4**

- 3.2.1 A table providing narrative on the educational journeys of a representative selection of Key Stage 4 pupils can be found in Annex B. These pen pictures highlight some of the circumstances referred to in the previous report to committee (Briefing ED13126), held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013.
- 3.2.2 The KS4 examination cohort of looked was extremely small in academic Year 2013, with only 19 pupils in the reporting group. This contrasts with an average reporting group of 28-32. Of these 19, six were accommodated during Key Stage 4, that is, aged 14 or

above. It is this particular group of young people with whom it is very difficult to engage, most of them being already out of mainstream school or out of education altogether. One young person in this cohort was placed in school below his chronological year group and so did not sit examinations this year,

- 3.2.3 When young people in this age group become looked after, the Virtual School works closely with education colleagues to identify appropriate education provision. Some young people are doing well and do not need a change of school at all. Where they do, however, it may mean working across several education authorities and with independent providers. Although education in a good or outstanding mainstream school would be the ideal setting for all looked after children, it is often impractical to seek to place an angry, disaffected young person into an established year group in a fast moving mainstream YR10 or 11 class. Even if the young person is able and has not missed too much school, matching GCSE courses and examining boards is very challenging with the risk of the young person missing large sections of a scheme of work or possibly repeating the same. This issue is compounded in Bromley with many secondary schools starting GCSE courses in YR9.
- 3.2.4 Young people living in Bromley are likely to have education provision secured for them much more quickly than those placed with Bromley foster carers or Independent fostering agencies outside the borough. This is because Bromley's multi-agency approach to placing looked after children and young people is unusually robust and the range of alternative provisions is flexible and accommodating, with some providers offering multiple GCSEs and others a more vocational approach. Even so, as demonstrated in the case studies, engaging the young people is often challenging and complex arrangements often have to be abandoned. Other local authorities do not prioritise looked after children from outside their borders as well as Bromley does or are not willing to offer such a good range of provision. In these circumstances, Bromley children may be provided with 1:1 tuition in their placements or provided with transport to enable them to remain in education settings in Bromley.
- 3.2.5 In previous years, young people who were reluctant to engage might have been offered a wide range of alternative courses, offering flexible ways of learning but still resulting in the acquisition of a qualification equivalent to GCSE. The new directive on alternatives to GCSE means that many of those courses are not being offered and this cohort was the first to be affected by these changes, effectively leaving some with no GCSEs at all, where in previous years, their work would have been recognised in reporting. This was also the cohort affected by the reduction (and in some schools complete disappearance) of December/January GCSE entry in YR11. It has long been the practice to enter young people for core subjects if they are deemed to be at risk of disengaging, thus ensuring that they achieve something rather than risk waiting until the summer when the child might have finally been excluded or simply stopped attending.
- 3.2.6 Unusually, this cohort had a number of children who were not engaging at any level. These young people did not settle in foster placements and were unwilling to work with any agency, including social care or targeted youth support. This year group of young people provides clear evidence of the barriers to successfully engaging in education which are created by neglect, disruption and emotional distress. Some of these young people will do well in small settings where they are less likely to be confronted by adults or humiliated because of the gaps in their learning but a number of them have other needs that take precedence over the need to acquire an education. For those young people, the Virtual School and its partners continue to explore and offer alternatives to formal education (i.e. Flexible Learning, vocational training etc), and opportunities to access leisure and learning in the community which will build resilience and prepare young people for independence.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Finance, Policy, Legal and Personnel implication's
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Education Portfolio Plan 2012/13 ECS Plan for 2012/13 Building Better Futures for All; Children's Strategy for 2012 to 2015